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# New Hope for Clues In Italian Scandals

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ROME, March 24 — The arrest earlier this month of Francesco Pazienza by the United States Customs Service may shed some light on scandals that have rocked Italy in the past five years, including the collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano.

Mr. Pazienza, a 38-year-old Italian business consultant, was arrested in New York on March 4 by Customs officials, who described him as "Italy's No. 1 fugitive." He is being held on behalf of the Italian authorities without bail pending extradition proceedings, which are expected to be completed in about a month.

Italian authorities believe Mr. Pazienza can assist their inquiries into not only the collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano, the main interest of the American investigators, but also the equally complex scandals involving the Propaganda 2 Masonic lodge and its relationship to parts of the Italian secret services.

Mr. Pazienza, who has been sought by authorities in Milan since April 1983, is wanted in connection with charges of fraud and misappropriation of funds in 1981 and 1982 stemming from the collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano. He was charged after his disappearance.

The circumstances of Mr. Pazienza's arrest, like many aspects of his career, have elements of the spectacular and the mysterious.

## A Visit to Customs Office

When Mr. Pazienza walked into the Customs offices in New York, he was not expecting to be arrested. According to his lawyers, he thought he was to have further consultations with Customs officials, who have been seeking information from him about some \$1.4 billion missing from the Banco Ambrosiano.

Patrick T. O'Brien, the assistant regional commissioner for enforcement at the Customs Service's New York office, said that Customs officials had met with Mr. Pazienza in September 1984 to discuss the Banco Ambrosiano case and the possible laundering of the missing funds.

"What we were trying to do is trace the money, and he knew as much about it as anybody," Mr. O'Brien said.

He was not arrested at the earlier meeting, Mr. O'Brien said, because the necessary paperwork had not been completed.

Italian investigators believe that Mr. Pazienza knows a good deal about loans by Banco Ambrosiano to a number of dummy companies, mostly in Latin America, that abruptly left the bank with \$1.4 billion in losses. Mr. O'Brien said the United States' investigation focused on the possible "laundering" of "several hundred million dollars."

But both Mr. O'Brien and Dennis Fagan, the Customs Service's special agent for enforcement, denied that any deal had been struck with Mr. Pazienza. Mr. Fagan emphasized that at

the time of Mr. Pazienza's arrest, he "was being considered as either a defendant or a witness in the U.S." in the Ambrosiano investigation, and the Customs Service had not yet decided which.

## Bank Official Found Dead

Italian officials want to question Mr. Pazienza about many other matters as well, notably the death of Roberto Calvi, the head of Banco Ambrosiano. Mr. Calvi was found hanging beneath Blackfriars' Bridge in London in June 1982 and Mr. Pazienza was in London a few days before Mr. Calvi's death.

Mr. Calvi had hired Mr. Pazienza to help him assemble a group of new investors to get the bank out of financial difficulty and to help ward off Italian investigators. Mr. Pazienza was known for his extensive contacts in the Italian financial and political worlds.

Mr. Pazienza was a close aide to Gen. Giuseppe Santovito, the former head of the Italian intelligence service, the Servizio Informazioni e Sicurezza Militare, or SISMI.

According to an Italian Parliamentary Commission, Mr. Pazienza was the moving force behind a group within the Italian intelligence service known as "Super S." The group has been accused of carrying out illegal activities for the Italian intelligence service, notably smuggling. Italian courts have also said Mr. Pazienza served as a liaison between "Super S" and the Mafia.

General Santovito was subsequently forced to resign after his name appeared on the list of members of the P-2 lodge. The lodge's membership included many of Italy's most important public figures. Its members were accused of conspiring against the Italian state and the discoveries about the lodge brought down the Government of Prime Minister Arnaldo Forlani.

## Claimed Ties to U.S. Politicians

Even more peculiar are Mr. Pazienza's claimed friendships with American officials, mostly conservatives and Republicans.

According to Richard N. Gardner, former United States Ambassador to Italy, Mr. Pazienza apparently attempted to serve as a link between Italian officials and the incoming Reagan Administration after the election of 1980.

"During my last months as Ambassador, I was informed by people in Washington that Pazienza was acting as a go-between between the new Reagan Administration and the Italian leadership," Mr. Gardner said in a telephone interview from his office at Columbia Law School, where he is now a professor.

"He may have been doing it on his own initiative, to make himself look important," Mr. Gardner said. "I have no idea whether he had any mandate from the Reagan Administration."

Mr. Gardner, who said he had no contact with Mr. Pazienza, was appointed Ambassador to Italy by President Carter and served from March 1977 until March 1981.

Michael Ledeen, who served in the State Department under former Secretary of State Alexander Haig and knew Mr. Pazienza, said he believed that Mr. Pazienza vastly exaggerated his ties to the Reagan Administration in order to increase his own influence in Italy.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Ledeen said Mr. Pazienza had tried to encourage Italian politicians to bypass Mr. Gardner. At the time, Mr. Gardner was about to be replaced as Ambassador and was perceived here as a Democrat with little influence in the incoming Administration.

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**Article About Billy Carter**

Mr. Ledeen is now an international fellow at the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies. Mr. Ledeen said he got to know Mr. Pazienza in late 1980. At the time, Mr. Ledeen was working as a freelance journalist, and he said that Mr. Pazienza helped him confirm information for an article on Billy Carter, President Carter's brother.

The article, which appeared in The New Republic shortly before the 1980 election, told of meetings between Billy Carter and leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization and also accused the President's brother of accepting \$50,000 from Libya.

Mr. Ledeen said that he cut off his contacts with Mr. Pazienza in early 1981, well before the Banco Ambrosiano scandal broke, because he became suspicious of some of Mr. Pazienza's activities.

Mr. Ledeen said he knew of no specific case in which Mr. Pazienza had acted on behalf of the Reagan Administration.